

Minutes – Acton Finance Committee
June 9, 2009, 7:30 p.m.
Town Hall

Pursuant to a notice duly posted with the Town Clerk and with a quorum of members present, the Acton Finance Committee convened at 7:30 p.m. on June 9, 2009 to review various matters.

Members present for the meeting: Herman Kabakoff, Chair, Mary Ann Ashton, Vice Chair, Pat Easterly, Bob Evans, Kent Sharp, Doug Tindal, Steve Noone, and Associate Member Brandy Brandon.
Karen Kucala present.

Various presenters and members of the public including Jo-Ann Berry, Bill Ryan, Sharon Smith McManus, Xuan Kong, Marie Altieri, Dick Calandrella, Paul Hoff, Bob Ingram, Rich Logan, Charlie Kadlec, Roland Bartl, Paulina Knibbe, John Murray, Helen Probst, Nancy Tavernier, Ann Chang, Sharon Groose, Doug Halley, Lauren Rosenzweig, Kate Crosby, Andy Munro, Terra Friedrichs, Valerie Malinowski, Dick Brewer, Diane Fitzpatrick, Matt Liebman, Ron Beck.

Chairman Herman Kabakoff called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. and offered an overview of the agenda. No public participation was offered. The minutes of the May 26 meeting were moved, seconded, and approved unanimously.

Local and Regional Schools – 3Q Review and Current Financial Status Update

Superintendent Bill Ryan distributed copies of his presentation (attached), which provided an overview of FY09 expenses and comparison with budgeted amounts, and also some comparisons of possible scenarios for FY10 state aid under the governor's budget, the House budget, and the Senate budget. Chapter 70 for the fourth quarter has been withheld, and AB and APS districts applied for a grant, which would use some of the federal stimulus money to plug this gap. The governor made the decision to use the stimulus money, intended for FY11, in FY09, and money is expected to be received on June 30 (approximately \$1.3 million). ABRSD object budget shows deficits in SPED tuition (which will be met by the final circuit breaker payment), and surpluses in salary, health insurance and utilities line items. APS object budget is similar. APS turnback is expected to be approximately \$150-200K; ABRSD turnback to E&D is expected to be approximately \$450K. Mr. Ryan advised the Fincom that he had met with Dr. Stephen Mills about the FY10 budget, its challenges and possible ideas, and that they will be transitioning during the month of July.

Fincom members asked questions about health insurance, utilities, and schedule for contract negotiations, and wished the superintendent well and thanked him for his time in Acton.

Discussion of Zoning Articles for STM (Articles 2 and 6)

Roland Bartl, Town Planner, discussed two zoning articles on the STM warrant. Article 2 deals with a change in zoning for child care facilities in residential districts. Fincom members asked several questions related to the proposal and then Steve Noone moved that the Finance Committee recommend this article to the Special Town Meeting, and Kent seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Article 6 would change the definition of manufacturing to include renewable energy for eligibility for grant money. Fincom members discussed and then decided to defer their vote until before the Special Town Meeting.

Articles 4 and 5 for STM from Green Advisory Board

Kate Crosby of Acton's Green Advisory Board presented information about Articles 4 and 5. She said that there is an opportunity to enter into a power purchase agreement where private company leases municipal space for solar panels. Article 4 is Home Rule Petition to allow town to lease municipal properties for up to 25 years for renewable energy contracts. Article 5, if Home rule is not necessary, asks for TM authorization for BOS to lease municipal properties for up to 25 years for renewable energy contracts. She emphasized that the town is under no obligation to enter into contracts; passing one of these articles would allow the town to explore. Finance Committee members asked several questions related to clarification of the intent of the proposed articles and the expected per-kilowatt hour power cost. Members expressed concern that the language was too broad and there were questions about maintenance of roofs, demolition of buildings, and more. The Finance Committee deferred a recommendation on these two articles.

SAC Discussion – Article 1 for STM

Helen Probst and Andy Munro, co-chairs of SAC, presented information updating the Finance Committee on the activities of their committee since the last presentation on May 15. The SAC has participated in many meetings, significant outreach, prepared written materials, and developed financial analyses. The attached slides detail the financial details, but the highlights included:

- The proposal has removed street paving and thus town funding – only possible town impact would be if we did the design but never built ~ \$124K
- Determined supersizing amount = \$499,800
- Estimated betterment ~ \$16,665 or \$83.75 per month over 30 years
- Hookup ~ \$5,400 (estimated between \$7,500 and \$9,000 less potential tax credit of 40%)
- Ongoing costs ~ \$85/month (includes sewer usage (\$68), electricity (\$2), pump maintenance (\$15))
- Pay up front = \$22,065 (betterment + hookup), plus annual O&M of \$1,020 (85 x 12)
- Finance the betterment: \$5,400 hookup with \$2,025 annual total (\$1,020 O&M + financing of betterment of \$1,005)

John Murray presented information about financial plan for sewer extension (slides attached).

Finance Committee members asked questions about the proposal, and commented on the proposal. Several members of the public also commented on the proposal. Several Finance Committee members are interested in the survey feedback from the affected neighborhoods, and others have outstanding questions about the proposal. The Finance Committee decides to defer their recommendation on this article until the meeting before the Special Town Meeting.

Other Articles for STM

The Finance Committee addressed the remaining articles for the Special Town Meeting.

Article 3 – Resolution – South Acton Commuter Rail Station

Steve Noone moved that the Finance Committee recommend, Kent Sharp seconded. Bob Evans objected to paragraph #2 regarding “BOS take every action.” Motion was unanimously approved, and Bob Evans was assigned to speak for the Finance Committee.

Article 7 – Amend Town Charter – Commission on Disabilities

Mrs. Ashton moved that the Finance Committee recommend, and Mr. Sharp seconded. Motion passed unanimously, and Mrs. Ashton was assigned to speak for the Finance Committee.

Article 8 – Amend Town By-Laws – Corrections and Clarifications

Doug Tindal moved that the Finance Committee recommend, and Mr. Evans seconded. Motion passed unanimously, and Mr. Tindal was assigned to speak for the Finance Committee.

Article 9 – Accept Sidewalk Easement – 442 Massachusetts Avenue

Mr. Noone moved that the Finance Committee recommend, and Pat Easterly seconded. Motion passed unanimously, and Ms. Clifford was assigned to speak for the Finance Committee.

Article 10 – Accept Land Gift – Conant Street

Mr. Evans moved that the Finance Committee recommend, and Mr. Noone seconded. Motion passed unanimously, and Mr. Kabakoff was assigned to speak for the Finance Committee.

Article 11 – Transfer of Funds for Overlay Deficits

Mr. Tindal moved that the Finance Committee recommend, and Mr. Evans seconded. The motion passed unanimously, and Mr. Mullin was assigned to speak for the Finance Committee.

The Finance Committee will meet at 6 p.m. in Room 115N at AB Regional High School before the Special Town Meeting and vote recommendations for Article 1 (Mr. Sharp will speak for the Finance Committee) and Articles 4, 5 and 6 (Mr. Tindal will speak for the Finance Committee).

ALG Meeting 06/15

Chairman Kabakoff said the agenda would have two topics: ground rules and what to do if the schools receive more funding from the state. He asked for feedback from the committee about televising the ALG meetings and scheduling meetings in the evening. Members did not support either idea; Mr. Noone said it may not change what people say, but may make it more difficult to reach a consensus. Mr. Evans thought allowing people in the audience to comment or other members of the committee is not a wise idea – everything has to come back to committees and that’s the more appropriate place to have conversation. Pat Easterly doesn’t think it’s a good idea. Meeting schedules are difficult enough with evening meetings.

Mr. Sharp moved to adjourn at 11 p.m., and the motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Ann Ashton, Vice Chairman